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ABSTRACT

To determine the appropriateness of courses and programs offered to teacher education students at the University of Southern Mississippi, an annual follow-up of graduates is conducted. Each first year teacher in a sample from the total group is treated in the following manner to get needed information. First, a teacher education faculty member observes the teacher and evaluates performance based on the objectives determined in the teacher preparation program at the university. Additionally, the former student is asked to complete a form which seeks to determine the degree to which the graduate finds utility in the various courses taken at the university. A third activity for the faculty member is obtaining an evaluation of the teacher's performance by an immediate superior. All of this is done, not to evaluate the teacher, but to determine the quality of training provided by the university. Third year teachers are asked to do steps two and three in order to obtain a view of the teachers' perceptions of the appropriateness of their training after a longer period of experience. Data obtained have been used to alter courses and programs in the teacher education program. (Author/JD)

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FOLLOW-UP OF TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES

1983

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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Thanks are in order for all of those who gave their time and effort to this project. Dr. Bob Brumfield and Dr. Elizabeth Cancienne visited with all the teachers chosen in the sample. Several department chairmen contributed their ideas to refinement of the instruments used in data collection. Dean Bobby Anderson lent his encouragement and support in seeking funds for the project. The upper level administrative staff of the university provided funding. Mrs. Dean McInnis managed the materials which are necessary in a study like this.

Special thanks are in order for all teachers, principals and superintendents who agreed to participate. Without their support we would not be able to evaluate our programs in this manner. Their efforts should be applauded and their continued assistance in this annual project is solicited.

GSR

FOLLOW-UP OF TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES

1983

For the purposes of long-range planning and program improvement in teacher education, an annual study was begun in the fall of 1981 by the College of Education and Psychology. The University provides funding and the College of Education and Psychology provides personnel for the task.

Methodology

A sample of 40 first-year teachers (1982 graduates) and 30 third-year teachers (1980 graduates) was chosen from USM graduates in South Mississippi. These steps were involved in data collection:

1. First-year teachers were observed in the classroom by a university faculty member for at least one hour in order to make an evaluation. Observers were both highly trained and had many years experience in classroom teaching and in the evaluation of classroom instruction. The skills which are required in undergraduate teacher education programs in Mississippi were the objects of the observation. These skills are required for teacher certification in the state. It should be noted that the objective of the entire study was to evaluate the University's

teacher preparation program, not the evaluation of the teachers who participated.

2. In addition to this observation of instruction, each first year teacher was given an instrument to complete which called for an evaluation of university courses taken and university help received in preparing to teach. These were mailed to the campus by each teacher after completion. Comments were also solicited. These unedited comments appear in this report.

3. Each of the 30 third year teachers was visited and given the instrument to be completed relating to the relevance and quality of their teacher education program. Responses were mailed to the University for analysis. These teachers met with University personnel only to be given the instrument and to encourage their participation.

4. Supervisors (usually principals) were given performance evaluation forms on each first and third year teacher in the sample. They completed these and mailed them to the University for analysis. Data requested also related directly to competencies required by certification. The University's program in teacher education follows these requirements closely.

Subjects

Participating with the University in the study were 24 school administrators who were the supervisors of the first year teachers. Table 1 indicates numbers and percentages of graduates on which complete follow-up

was done during this study. Of the 66 teachers participating, 38 were in their first year of teaching and 28 were in their third year.

Anonymity was stressed throughout the process. Names of individuals and schools were left out of the analysis of every instrument.

Table 1

First- and Third-Year Teachers by Teaching Level

Level	1st-year Graduates	3rd-year Graduates	Total
Elementary	14	8	22
Secondary	9	11	20
Special Education	15	9	24
Total	38	28	66

Findings

One of the major purposes in doing this type of study is to get the perceptions of former students as to the quality and appropriateness of the undergraduate teacher education program. Table 2 shows data obtained from such a rating by graduates. Former students who responded reported an average of 110.45 semester hours taken at USM (Std. Dev. of 36.65).

Table 2

Teacher Education Program Rating by
First- and Third-Year Teachers

Aspect of Program	Rating 1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev.
The Faculty		1	18	38	9	3.83	.67
Interaction with Faculty		8	24	23	11	3.56	.91
Interaction with Advisor	3	6	17	19	21	3.74	1.14
Contacts with Fellow Students		2	12	32	19	4.05	.78
Preparation for NTE	2	19	20	17	8	3.15	1.07
Elective Courses		6	33	19	6	3.39	.79
Required Courses		6	25	27	7	3.54	.81
The Library	2	4	10	28	22	3.97	1.00
The Curriculum Materials Center	1	5	15	27	15	3.79	.95
Pre-Student Teaching Field Experiences	3	8	16	28	9	3.50	1.04
Student Teaching		4	13	24	24	4.04	.91

N = 66

Rating Scale: 1 (Poor) through 5 (Superior)

Data in Table 2 indicate a general satisfaction with the undergraduate program. Since students in education curricula don't have too many elective courses, it is not surprising that the item on elective courses received a relatively low rating in the group. However, the item dealing with preparation for the National Teacher Examination is cause for some concern. Encouraging are the marks given to the faculty, advisors, fellow students, the library, the curriculum materials center, and the student teaching experience. Further analysis by teaching major and by year graduated can be seen in Table 2A.

Former students were asked to indicate some of their reasons for attending USM. Data in Table 3 reveal the expected results. The University serves a region of the state from which many teacher education students come, but it also has a good reputation among the graduates.

These data indicate that teacher education students at USM choose it for a variety of reasons. Foremost is proximity to home and the reputation of the University and College of Education and Psychology. An interesting note is the disparity between the reputation of the College and the reputation of the faculty. Reasons for this should be explored. Having a comprehensive program where most of the desired areas of teaching are available is a plus in attracting students.

Table 2A

Program Rating by Majors and by Year Graduated

Aspect of Program	Elem. Teachers			Sec. Teachers			Spec. Ed. Teachers			First Year Teachers			Third Year Teachers		
	X	SD	N	X	SD	N	X	SD	N	X	SD	N	X	SD	N
The Faculty	3.86	5.77	22	4.05	.60	20	3.63	.59	19	3.92	.59	38	3.71	.76	28
Interaction with Faculty	3.64	1.04	22	3.55	.76	20	3.52	1.02	19	3.71	.90	38	3.35	.91	28
Interaction with Advisor	3.63	1.00	22	3.85	1.39	20	3.74	1.15	19	3.68	1.28	38	3.82	.94	28
Contacts with Fellow Students	4.05	.79	22	4.15	.81	20	4.05	.80	18	4.27	.60	37	3.75	.89	28
Preparation for NTE	3.73	.98	22	2.90	.97	20	2.84	1.07	19	3.24	1.10	38	3.04	1.03	28
Elective Courses	3.43	.68	21	3.65	.99	20	3.22	.55	18	3.33	.83	36	3.46	.74	28
Required Courses	3.82	.66	22	3.65	.88	20	3.11	.81	19	3.54	.87	37	3.54	.74	28
The Library	4.13	.94	22	4.10	1.02	20	3.74	.93	19	3.84	1.10	38	4.14	.84	28
Curriculum Materials Center	4.09	.86	22	3.90	91	20	3.29	1.04	17	3.76	1.02	38	3.84	.85	25
Pre-Student Teaching Field Experience	3.82	.79	22	3.52	.96	19	3.21	1.32	19	3.55	1.00	38	3.42	1.10	26
Student Teaching	4.18	.91	22	4.10	.91	20	3.89	.99	19	4.21	.90	38	3.81	.87	27

Scale 1 (Poor) through 5 (Superior)

Table 3

Reasons for Choosing the University of Southern Mississippi

Factor	Means of Responses	Std. Dev.
Reputation of the University	3.60	1.05
Reputation of the College of Education and Psychology	3.64	1.19
Availability of Financial Aid	2.25	1.43
Reputation of the Faculty	2.88	1.26
Availability of Desired Program of Study	3.94	1.16
Proximity of USM to Home	4.44	.91

N = 66

Scale: 1 (None) through 5 (Much)

Since obtaining a job after college is important to most students, the study sought to determine methods of finding employment used by graduates. Table 4 lists strategies used by the respondents. As can be seen, some students used several methods.

Table 4

Method of Obtaining First Teaching Job

Method	Number	Percent
Used own initiative	45	68.2
Assistance of advisor	2	3.0
Assistance of other faculty	3	4.5
USM Placement Office	2	3.0
Private employment agency	0	0.0
Returned to previous position	1	1.5
Assistnace from relatives and friends	25	37.9
Other*	12	18.2

N =66
* Other included taking a job where student teaching was done (10), and had worked as an aide in the school (2).

Results indicate that for this group, jobs were obtained without university assistance. Since, however, the sample came from schools within 100 miles of USM it can be assumed that most of the respondents obtained jobs at or near their homes and did not need the services of the Placement Office or other university personnel. It is worth noting that student teaching is an important factor in the employment of a number of the graduates. This fact should be stressed by university faculty members in methods classes.

Teacher Rating of Required Courses

Tables 5, 6, and 7 indicate ratings of courses in professional education at USM. This information should be especially helpful to departments in the College of Education and Psychology as they evaluate courses taught within their departments.

Elementary Education

Given the opportunity to evaluate courses taken in their undergraduate program, as to their value in the teaching process, elementary education graduates generally gave good marks on all their courses (Table 5). A scale of one (low) to five (high) was used. Very good ratings were given to CIE 306 ($\bar{X}$ = 4.32), Language Arts in the Elementary School; REF 416 ($\bar{X}$ = 4.06), Utilization of Audiovisual and Media Equipment; CIE 407 ($\bar{X}$ = 4.00), Strategies for Teaching Reading in the Elementary School; and CIE 301 ($\bar{X}$ = 4.00), Methods and Materials in Elementary School Arithmetic. All of these courses had relatively small standard deviations, indicating general agreement on the usefulness of the courses.

Receiving lower marks were courses in physical education and music education, areas in which many elementary teachers have specialized support services. They, therefore, probably don't value these courses as highly.

Secondary Education

Secondary graduates also were given an opportunity

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of Ratings
of Courses by Elementary Education Graduates

Course	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
CIE 343	28	3.40	.91
CIE 425	22	3.77	1.06
Block of Time	17	3.70	1.31
CIE 301	25	4.00	1.22
CIE 305	22	3.55	1.26
CIE 306	25	4.32	.95
CIE 309	24	3.71	1.40
CIE 317	26	3.58	1.14
MED 361	22	2.73	1.32
ARE 309	25	3.32	.99
PED 320	18	3.11	1.13
PED 321	13	3.23	1.17
SCE 432	19	3.47	1.54
CIE 403	16	3.81	1.22
CIE 407	14	4.00	1.11
CIE 412	15	3.73	1.28
REF 400	16	3.56	1.15
REF 416	18	4.06	.94
REF 469	18	3.44	1.25
EPY 370	17	3.47	1.46
EPY 374	19	3.32	1.00
CIE 300	15	3.67	1.04
CIE 422	15	3.87	1.30
SPE 400	14	3.29	1.63

Scale 5(high) 1(low)

to rate courses in professional education (Table 6). Courses in the major area methods were rated most valuable for those teachers ($\bar{X}$ = 4.08). Courses in Educational Psychology ($\bar{X}$ = 3.75) and Human Growth and Development ($\bar{X}$ = 4.00) also rated well with graduates. Foundations courses, which are being absorbed into other state required courses fared well in the ratings. It sould be noted that the recently mandated courses CIS 310, CIS 422, and SPE 400 rated lower than other courses. Attempts should be made by departments to make those courses more relevant to the work required in the classroom. Based on results of previous surveys, CIS 422 is being changed to redirect the focus of the course to include more foundations.

Special Education

A larger group of special educators was included in this study than in previous studies. Since special education constitutes a sizeable portion of the staff in many schools, this larger group was surveyed from the sample. Many of the courses received excellent ratings (Table 7). Noteworthy are courses in Language and Speech Development (SHS 101), the Psychology and Education of the Exceptional Child (SPE 400), and General Methods in Special Education (SPE 402). The only ratings falling below a mean of 3.00 were for courses in Methods and Materials for the Multiply, Profoundly, and Severely Handicapped (SPE 401) and the course in Learning Disabilities (SPE 430). Several courses received ratings slightly above the 3.00 mean. Some attention to

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of Ratings of Courses by Secondary Education Graduates

Course	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
CIS 313	12	3.33	1.15
Major Area Methods	12	4.08	.99
Methods Course Field Experience	9	3.22	1.39
REF 400	12	3.83	1.03
REF 416	13	3.00	1.41
REF 469	13	3.69	1.49
EPY 372	12	4.00	.95
EPY 374	12	3.75	1.14
CIS 310	12	2.50	1.62
CIS 422	10	2.40	1.26
SPE 400	9	2.89	1.45

Scale 5 (high) 1 (low)

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations of Ratings of Courses by Special Education Graduates

Course	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
SPE 402	21	3.76	1.04
EPY 370	22	3.72	1.03
EPY 372	19	3.68	.82
EPY 374	22	3.18	1.13
CIE 306	20	3.70	1.26
CIE 309	24	3.54	1.25
SPE 401	24	2.87	1.36
SPE 403	22	3.45	1.01
SPE 430	18	2.94	1.43
SPE 431	14	3.14	1.10
SPE 432	16	3.25	1.00
SPE 433	9	3.22	.97
SPE 440	18	3.22	1.26
SPE 411	13	3.23	1.60
SPE 450	12	3.16	1.47
SPE 451	13	3.69	1.18
SPE 470	12	3.67	.78
SHS 401	15	4.07	.96
REF 400	16	3.63	1.50
REF 469	15	3.47	1.30
SPE 400	17	3.94	.90
Career Education	11	3.18	1.83
Physical Education Elective	13	3.46	.97
Sp. Ed. Practicum	10	3.30	1.25

Scale 5 (high) 1 (low)

making those courses more meaningful would be appropriate.

Further analysis using the chi-square technique was done to determine if any significant difference was present when the responses of first year teachers were measured against the responses of third year teachers. Additionally, this technique was used to compare the three teaching areas, elementary, secondary, and special education. This analysis revealed the following results worthy of note:

1. First year teachers rated interaction with advisor more highly than third year graduates although as a whole 60% of the entire group rated this item above average or superior.

2. First year teachers rated contacts with fellow students higher than third year teachers.

3. First year teachers expressed greater value for student teaching than did third year teachers, although almost three-fourths of the entire group rated it at above average or superior.

4. Secondary teachers rated their interaction with faculty lower than elementary and special education teachers.

5. Elementary teachers indicated that they were better prepared for the NTE at a higher rate than the other groups.

6. Secondary teachers rated their elective courses higher than elementary and special education teachers.

7. Special education teachers rated the required courses at a lower level than did elementary and secondary

teachers.

8. All three groups (elementary, secondary, and special education) rated the student teaching similarly with almost three-fourths rating it above average or superior.

9. Elementary and secondary students chose USM on the reputation of the faculty more frequently than special education teachers.

10. Secondary teachers chose USM more frequently because of an available desired program.

Supervisors' Ratings of Graduates

The immediate supervisor, usually the school principal, of every first and third year teacher surveyed was given a rating sheet to complete and return to the University. This rating sheet contained a list of 15 variables related to the teachers' capabilities in the classroom plus an overall rating of the teacher. Table 8 is a summary of these ratings. Observation of the table reveals that all variables were rated high and the supervisors were consistent in their evaluations on the separate items. This high rating phenomenon is consistent with other research studies which show that supervisors, especially principals, tend to rate teaching high as compared to other raters. Using anything above 3.5 as a rough guide for good quality, no cause for concern is evident in these ratings. However, it may be of some concern that the lowest rating was in professional activities. This should be considered when courses are being changed to meet needs more directly.

Table 8

Supervisors' Ratings of USM Teacher Education Graduates

Performance Area	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Speaking Skills	62	3.64	.68
Writing Skills	61	3.62	.69
Knowledge of Subject Matter	61	3.83	.69
Knowledge of Students' Developmental Patterns	62	3.52	.67
Enthusiasm for Teaching	62	4.13	.78
Lesson Planning Skills	61	3.77	.92
Rapport with Students	62	4.02	.82
Rapport with Fellow Teachers	62	4.06	.96
Classroom Management	62	3.66	.96
Record Keeping	62	3.74	.79
Pupil Interest and Understanding of Subject Matter	62	3.82	.78
Testing and Reporting	62	3.65	.77
Use of a Variety of Teaching Aids and Methods	62	3.68	.84
Discipline	62	3.61	.96
Participation in Professional Activities	62	3.48	.86
Supervisor's General Rating	62	3.77	.78

Rating Scale 1 = Poor 5 = Superior

To get a better idea of the reliability of these ratings, a run was done which compares an average of the specific evaluations contained in the first 15 items with the overall general rating. The supervisor's rated the teachers' overall performance at a mean of 3.77. When all other items were considered together the mean was 3.72. Therefore, the supervisors seem to be consistent in their ratings on specific items as compared to an overall rating.

University Coordinators' Ratings of First-Year Graduates

A rating scale of one (poor) to five (superior) was used by professors from the University who visited first year teachers' classrooms to evaluate all aspects of teaching and personal qualities. These variables are derived from the competencies which are used in the preparation program at the University. Each teacher was observed in the teaching process for one hour by a University coordinator in order to obtain the ratings. Both observers were trained and greatly experienced in the observation and criticism of classroom teaching. It was not always possible to observe every item listed on the rating sheet. This accounts for the different numbers. Table 9 presents a summary of these ratings. Two areas in which the graduates seem to have impressed the raters were personal qualities and oral and written English. Classroom management and discipline were rated high. This runs counter to the usual personal teacher concern that these are problem areas.

Table 9

Observers' Ratings of Instructions
First Year Graduates

Category / Item	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Personal Qualities			
Appearance	47	4.26	1.01
Poise	47	4.47	.55
Voice	47	4.43	.65
Enthusiasm for Teaching	47	4.17	.79
Interpersonal Skills			
Rapport with Students	47	4.26	.73
Rapport with Teachers	43	4.40	.69
General Preparation for Teaching			
Knowledge of Subject Matter	47	3.70	.72
Knowledge of Students' Developmental Patterns	47	3.77	.69
Lesson Planning Skills			
Specific Lesson Objectives	44	2.30	1.34
Weekly Plans	43	3.62	1.27
Oral and Written English			
Writing Skills	32	4.00	.84
Speaking Skills	47	4.00	.78
General Mastery of Methods			
Appropriate Teaching Methods	47	3.89	.96
Variety of Teaching Aids	47	3.53	.91
Clarity of Explanations	47	3.81	.77
Questionning Techniques	45	3.69	.76
Pupil Interest	47	3.96	.65
Pupil Understanding	47	3.68	.75
Individualizing Instruction	47	3.91	.90
Classroom Management and Discipline			
Discipline	47	4.36	.82
Classroom Management	46	4.13	.83
Record Keeping	45	3.73	.86
Efficient Use of Time	47	3.81	.97
Evaluation Skills			
Testing and Reporting	40	3.70	.82
Teacher Observation	47	3.95	.78
Professional Growth			
Self Improvement	45	4.15	.73

Scale 1 = Poor 5 = Superior

Concern should be voiced about the low quality of lesson planning skills. This indicates an area in which methods teachers could give more attention.

Further analysis was done to consider all variables within the broader categories outlined. Scores on specific items were combined to get data. These are presented in Table 10. Cause for immediate concern is found in lesson planning skills and in evaluation skills.

Table 10

Observers' Ratings of First-Year Teachers in Broad Categories

Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Personal Qualities	47	4.33	.59
Interpersonal Skills	43	4.36	.61
General Preparation for Teaching	47	3.73	.62
Lesson Planning Skills	43	2.98	.98
General Mastery of Methods	45	3.81	.62
Oral and Written English	32	4.01	.77
Classroom Management	44	4.02	.66
Evaluation Skills	40	3.85	.69

Rating Scale 1 = Poor 5 = Superior

In order to get some measure of consistency of ratings on each item as compared to the overall average on the 26 items, a correlation was done. Only two items were determined to be low contributors to the overall mean. These were individualizing instruction and discipline.

Summary and Conclusions

A follow-up study was designed and executed at the University of Southern Mississippi during the 1982-83 school year which sought to determine the effectiveness of the undergraduate teacher education program in meeting the needs of first- and third-year graduates of the program. Data were collected in several ways: 1) Each first- and third-year graduate was given a form which listed each professional education course taken at USM. They rated courses on a scale of 1(low) to 5(high). These were mailed to the University for analysis. 2) Each supervisor of the first- and third-year teachers was given a rating sheet to complete which included ratings of the teachers performance in critical areas. These were also mailed back to the University. 3) Each first-year teacher was observed by a university coordinator for one hour. They completed a rating sheet which included information related to the competencies upon which Mississippi teacher certification is based.

Data were analyzed and produced results which led to the following conclusions and recommendations.

1. Further attention should be given to direct

assistance in preparation for the National Teachers Examination.

2. Students in pre-service programs should be made aware of the importance of the student teaching experience in finding a job.

3. Elementary education courses are generally rated high, but the areas of physical education and music education need to be examined to determine why they are rated low.

4. The utility of CIS 310, CIS 422, and SPE 400 should be examined in programs for secondary education students.

5. Special education majors rated some courses in their area rather low. This indicates a need to determine what the content of the courses might be to better meet needs in actual teaching situations.

6. According to supervisors' ratings of graduates, it should be noted that USM teacher educators should encourage more professional improvement practices after students gain employment.

7. The university coordinators' ratings indicated a continuing need to prepare teachers more adequately in lesson planning skills. Evaluation skills need to be focused in pre-service programs.

The following comments were taken from returned questionnaires and rating sheets. They are edited only to remove names and other possible identifiers of persons or schools.